



SAFETY TOOLS FOR POOLS

Local requirements and key tips for residential pools, spas & hot tubs

In the Sun City, especially during warmer weather months, swimming pools and spas are a common way for adults and children alike to beat the heat. However, the City of El Paso would like to remind the community that there are local requirements in place and key information available emphasizing safety tools for residential swimming pools, spas and also hot tubs.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, every year, about 300 children under the age of 5 drown in swimming pools nationwide, typically in a pool owned by the family. In addition, more than 2,000 children receive medical treatment annually for injuries related to swimming pool accidents.

Because they are attractive to young children and are considered a special hazard, added safety measures are required locally for in-ground and above-ground pools, spas and hot tubs. The International Building Code states that any pool with more than 24 inches of water must have a four-foot fence or other barrier around it. In keeping with this national standard, a permit is required for the installation of all pools, spas and hot tubs over 24" or 2 feet in depth and with a water capacity of over 5,000 gallons. Small, inflatable pools meeting these criteria must also be protected.

Additionally of note, new requirements must also be met as necessary precautionary safety measures before a new residential pool, spa or hot tub can be installed, as of September 1, 2008. (18.10.310 Appendix G)

As an overview, a barrier or fence and entrapment avoidance devices are required for the installation of new swimming pools, spas and hot tubs and certain existing pools. The following are the barrier options that are available to meet the necessary barrier or fencing requirements:

Barrier Options:

Where a wall surrounding a home serves as part of a required barrier or fence, one of the following conditions must also be met:

1. An appropriate alarm is provided. *Doors with direct access to the pool through that wall shall be equipped with an alarm that produces an audible warning when the door and/or its screen are opened. (AG 105.2.9.1) **OR***
2. A self closing door with self-latching devices can be used as another type of protection. (AG 105.2.9.2)

Additionally, other alternatives to using a dwelling or “perimeter” home wall as part of a barrier include an acceptable:

1. Pool Cover (AG105.2.9.3) OR
2. Isolation Barrier (AG105.2.9.4)

It is also important to note that entrapment devices providing protection for swimming pool and spa suction outlets are also required as part of the Ordinance currently in effect. Zoning requirements, electrical clearances and utility easements must be also addressed.

Existing Pools:

Effective September 1, 2009 existing swimming pools will also need to meet the requirements of the new Ordinance if they meet one of the following conditions:

- There is a sale of residence that has a swimming pool at the time of the sale. (AG105.6.1)
- There is a change of use or character to the primary building occupancy on the property (AG105.6.2)
- A new pool ,spa, hot tub is installed or alterations are made for which a building permit is required (AG105.6.3)

Taken together, these design controls are intended to provide protection against potential drowning and near-drowning accidents by restricting access to swimming pools, spas and hot tubs.

However, preventive layers of protection are always highly recommended. The close supervision of children and preparedness in case of an emergency are among the essential steps to remember. Some additional pool safety tips to consider include:

- Installing a non-slip material around the pool
- Placing rescue and first aid equipment nearby
- Keeping electrical appliances, such as radios, away from the swimming pool to avoid exposure to electrical shock
- Removing floating toys when left unattended or not in use
- Learning cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)

To view these “Safety Tools for Pools” and the complete residential swimming pool ordinance for the City of El Paso, please visit <http://www.elpasotexas.gov/>

For any additional information, please contact The City of El Paso Development Services Department at 541-4558.